

D
767.99
N4
W5

Of MEN *and* BATTLE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO



3 1822 02399 9469

PICTURES BY DAVID FREDENTHAL

THE TEXT BY RICHARD WILCOX

HOWELL, SOSKIN, PUBLISHERS





LA 0. #2

~~4~~
D
767.9-1
N4
W5

Of MEN *and* BATTLE

PICTURES BY DAVID FREDENTHAL

THE TEXT BY RICHARD WILCOX

HOWELL, SOSKIN, PUBLISHERS • NEW YORK

Copyright, 1944, by David Fredenthal and Richard Wilcox

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Manufactured entirely in the United States of America

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

For permission to use material in this book the publishers express their gratitude to LIFE Magazine under whose arts program many of the drawings were made. Acknowledgment is also made to the War Art Unit of the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

To Ruth Ann and Robinson Fredenthal

INTRODUCTION

David Fredenthal is one of America's finest and most vital artists. Born in 1914 and brought up in Detroit, he developed without the aid of early formal art education. He has been the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and others awarded by the Museum of Modern Art and the Cranbrook Academy of Art, painted government murals (notably in Detroit's Naval Armory), worked in factories and was one of eight artists chosen to depict U. S. defense industries before being appointed a War Artist by the Army in February, 1943. He was sent by the Army to the South West Pacific and was painting in Australia when the art project was discontinued. There his contract was taken over by LIFE Magazine, in which his work has been reproduced and for which he is continuing to paint on overseas war assignments.

His collaborator, Richard Wilcox, is an Associate Editor of LIFE who has seen a good deal of war. With the Pacific Fleet off Midway Island on December 7, 1941, he brought back the first story of the Navy in action, sailed with escort vessels for three months in the North Atlantic, reported on pre-invasion England and more recently was present during the amphibious assaults on the Marshall Islands.

Together they have produced a work unique in the history of published

art or war reporting. This book is the detailed sketch story of the attack on Arawe, New Britain in December, 1943. The action was the first directed against the Japanese South Pacific defense arc and its success enabled further attacks to be made in New Guinea and New Britain and helped neutralize the great enemy bases of Rabaul and Truk.

But these remarkable drawings are more than the mere chronicling of an episode in the Pacific war. They portray the depressing effect of an alien environment upon civilized men and, more powerfully, they are true and sometimes terrifying records of the impact of war on men. All of them were done on the scene, many under fire, and they have caught the strain of unbearable tension and flashes of naked fear that mark the faces of men involved in battle. There is nothing topical or transitory about such emotions. They occur wherever men fight and they are as old and horrible as war itself.

OF MEN AND BATTLE

The time when men wait for battle is one of dull frustration. Nothing is permanent and it seems useless to try to settle down. Life is warped and overshadowed by the imminence of action. Men wonder when it will come, how they will act in it, whether their friends will come back from it. They deliberately dim the present by their wonder and sink deeper into the routine of existence to help make the present pass.

The worst place to wait to go into battle is on a South Pacific island. There everything is strange to the American soldier. He is denied all the familiar things of civilization — buildings, streets, billboards and fences — which give some comfort to those in other theatres. The very vegetation is alien and often dangerous. Under such conditions it is difficult to endure even the passage of time. He can do nothing but wait in his geographical and spiritual remoteness, walking under malevolent rains and through malignant forests, until he is caught up in the amphibious movement which will take him to what he secretly dreads.



Those who have fought before do not like to dwell on their experiences. But as the time for the new battle comes closer, they begin to think more and more about it and at last begin to talk. The conversation is held by small groups. It is not boastfully but rather businesslike, concerning the relative merits of carbines and rifles, whether grenades should be carried in preference to extra ammunition and what are the best methods of digging in for the night.

Though these are the things of life and death, the men do not give them too much verbal significance. It is enough to review the rules, the knacks of fighting each man has picked up and to go over them orally to be sure none has been forgotten. Every man remembers friends, killed in "the last show", whose forgetfulness or overconfidence is a personal and awesome object lesson.



Anything that speaks to men of home is beloved in the South Pacific. Old magazines and newspapers are kept to be read and reread until they are nothing but tatters. Mail is something to be savored in the privacy of bunks and tents, to be gone over again and again though every word is known by heart. The radio, though it is not as intimate, has just as much magic. In the strains of its music, every man can sink his deepest feelings and think of his own, special world at home.

It does not matter where the music originates, or who introduces it. Probably the most popular program, both because of quality and ease of reception, is one broadcast from Japan by "Tokyo Rose". She speaks the familiar patois of swing and her voice makes homesick men think of the highschool girls they knew at home.

"Hello all you Yanks down there in the islands", comes her husky young voice, "I'm going to play 'Blues In The Night' just for you."



Sometimes the tension lifts for a few happy moments. A group of officers, drinking bitter whiskey and water out of metallic-tasting canteen cups or chipped crockery mugs may be swept up in a haze of good-fellowship and a fine swirl of argument. The flies, mosquitoes, dust and heat become only minor irritations. The coming battle is a numb and not so insistent ache. No world seems too bad where there are men who will talk and laugh, as well as fight together.



Nights on the islands bring forth introspective thought and discussion. Against the almost palpable wall of darkness, the more sensitive men raise the rapiers of their minds, probing into worlds where all of them have looked and where some of them may soon go. They talk of divinity, of death — always being carefully impersonal — and ponder among themselves questions that undoubtedly perplexed the warriors of Greece and Rome.

All about them in such hours is a presence that they feel and which exerts a kind of terrible fascination. For men like this, war is particularly cruel. They are touched by every delicate shade of thought and emotion, to which the naturally or consciously callous are immune.



Not all pre-battle talk is rowdy or mystic. Some of it is straight, hardboiled fact, given by one man to another because the latter has asked for it or needs it. Older officers are inclined to seek out their subordinates and talk to them about past mistakes. Usually their approach is kindly but their words are frank. They know that now is the last time to get everything straight.

Sometimes the younger men make their own approach, troubled by problems they know they must solve. They listen intently to the men whose advice they have asked and then go back to the hard, hot cots and mull things over before sleep.



The fantastic landscapes of the islands seem to be part of a world that does not really exist. The towering mountains and the lush green jungles that run down their slopes into the valleys of head-high grass, do not invite exploration. Men keep to the paths and roads of their own areas, many of which are marked with crude reassuring signboards — "Broadway & Forty Second Street", or "Hollywood & Vine". The signs are manifestations of the desire for home — for the sight of Minnesota wheat fields and Texas prairies as well as the streets of big Eastern and Western cities. In the mountains of the South Pacific, airmen have fallen to their death. In the jungles lost men have wandered — maddened by insect bites and wasted with fevers. The terrain, for all its outward seductiveness, is considered with calculating respect.



Men never get used to the jungle but they learn to take advantage of it. They lop its coconuts for food and drink, they use its leaves for shelter and camouflage. Its streams are their laundries and bathing places. The brooding foliage seems less forbidding when a man is stripped and soaking in a tropical pool. The water soothes the blistering heat and bodies escape the enervating drag of fatigue for a while. Brown and muscled soldiers play like boys, swimming underwater, ducking each other and shouting as they dive from rocks and overhanging limbs. This exertion is the only one that does not leave them feeling worse than when they started. For a few moments they have escaped into a happy, innocent world.



Fear breaks to the surface sometimes. Oddly enough, it is not personal fear. Most men never think that they will be wounded or killed. That thought has been pushed so far back into their minds that it has almost disappeared. Instead, doubts of whether they will lead and take care of their men properly, if they will be able to make decisions coolly under fire or if they will act cowardly come to torture them.

With some, the only evidence of these doubts is a heightened flow of conversation and an exaggerated sociability. Others give in to their nerves. They pull abstractedly at cigarets or clench their hands until the ridge of knuckle stands white against the tanned skin. They loiter on the fringes of groups, half listening. Night finds them staring at the canvas roofs of their shelters while their flesh crawls and their stomachs knot under the tension of waiting.

Nervous moments



Sleep is a precious thing to soldiers. In its quiet, bodies store up energy that will soon be lavishly expended. In its forgetfulness, minds are freed from doubt and the tautening details of combat ahead. Troops waiting to shove off for attack seize sleep as an addict takes drugs. In spare moments during the day they stretch out for naps on the seats of jeeps, the backs of trucks and the sand of the island's beaches. As night comes, they look forward with a fierce eagerness to their cots. Nothing helps the time pass more quickly than complete and merciful unconsciousness. The lack of civilized comforts and the distance from home are bearable in sleep.

The men lie naked in the heat. Their bodies are filmed with a pale sheen of sweat. Air moves easily into their lungs and through the damp curls of their hair.

Veterans do not look too long on the rows of sleepers, for they have the curious and shocking attitudes of the grievously wounded or the newly dead.



Sleep takes the hardness out of soldiers' faces and leaves them an unguarded, boyish look.



Limbs spread and muscles that have been conditioned to a peak of fitness relax in sleep.



Soldiers nap fully clothed, surrounded by, or still holding, their military gear.

• •



The only time when a soldier can really be alone is when he is asleep.



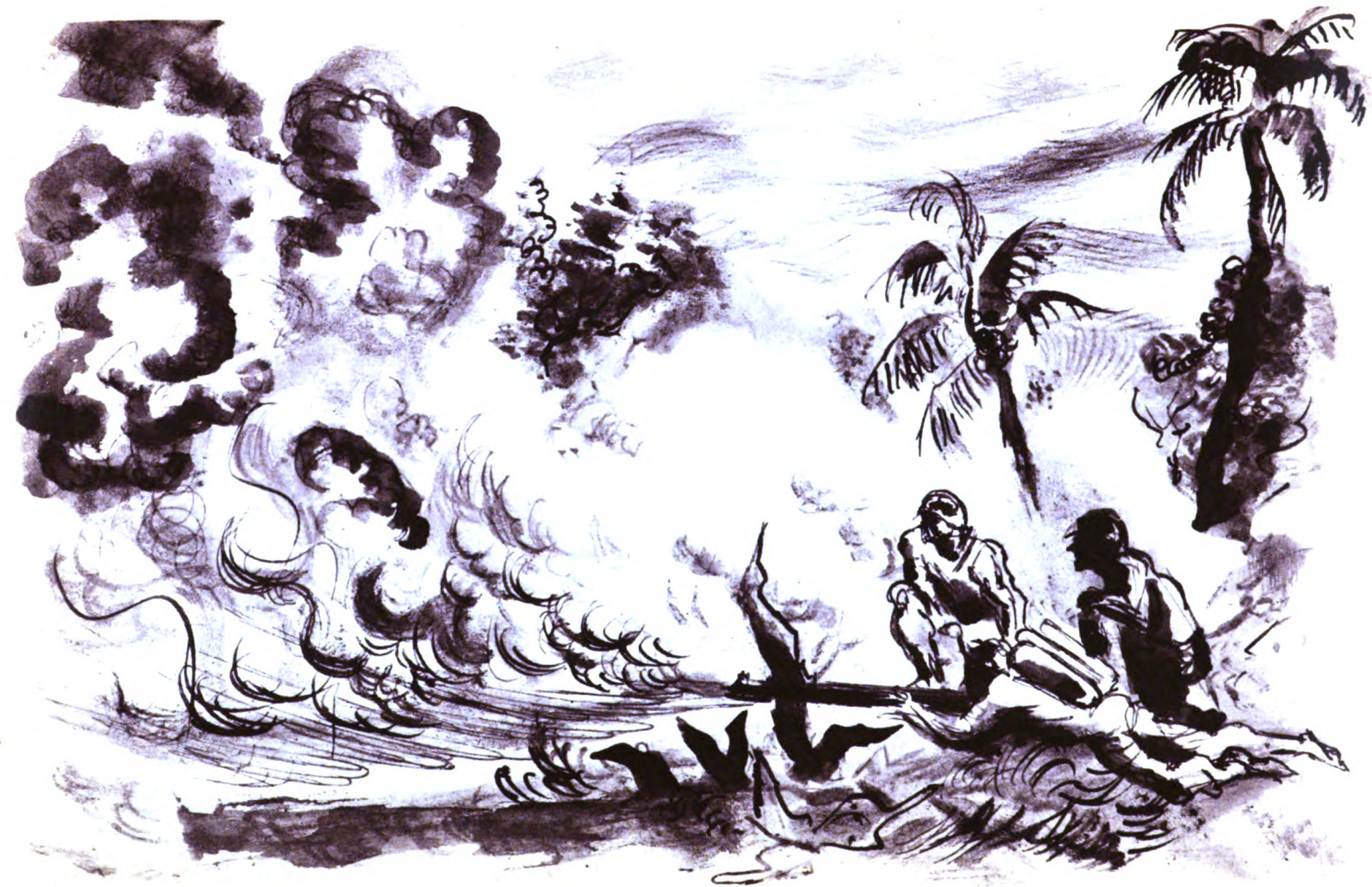
The tension breaks when the troops move out for the final battle practice. This rehearsal of the weapons and tactics they will use in the coming attack marks the end of waiting. The men are doing the things for which they have been trained and as they deploy in their maneuvers they laugh and joke naturally with each other. The scout companies move out into the bush. Mortar men set up their squat tubes and mark ranges on imaginary targets in the low hills. Down the roads move squads of men, intent on nothing now but the business of war.

Officers and enlisted men alike are fired by the decisiveness and gaiety of this movement. They realize that they have started the first chapter of battle and the action will continue until they are in possession of an enemy base. And though none of them may like what they are about to do, they appreciate and understand its necessity.



At the edge of the jungle, three men work with a favorite South Pacific weapon, the flame thrower. They experiment with varying mixtures of oil and gasoline to get the proper blast for the job on which they are about to embark. A high proportion of gasoline gives a quick, white-hot flame. A higher proportion of oil is better for pillboxes because it is not consumed immediately and will drip and creep into crevices, burning as it goes.

The agonizing breath of the flame thrower, propelled by pressure at a temperature of 4000 degrees, will suffocate a Jap an instant before it shrivels him to a blackened lump. With it, nests of men hidden underground or behind walls of concrete, coconut and coral can be burned out in seconds.



With the coming of the landing craft, the movement towards battle goes into its second phase. The big, shallow-draft LST's (Landing Ship, Tank) plunge their bows deep in the sandy shore and into their gaping maws file lines of men and vehicles. The vehicles are loaded with fuel, food, ammunition and water. The men carry their packs and personal gear. Inside the 2,200 ton ships both are arranged so that they can be unloaded with the greatest speed and efficiency.



Like beached whales the landing craft lie in the sand and all night the loading goes forward. There is something relentless about this activity. Each piece of equipment and every man loaded in the LST's is further assurance of the inevitability of attack. Men begin to get lost in the enormity of the preparation. The thing becomes bigger than soldiers and ships, it is a movement of historic significance.



The men are still elated in spirit but their bodies are beginning to tire. Down in the long, barnlike holds of the LSTs hard, hot work is going on. Vehicles are parked and braced, boxes of ammunition stacked and oil drums rolled forward to be unloaded. The men work swiftly against the most urgent of deadlines. If it is not met, the attack may easily fail before it starts. The ships, men and cargo must keep an exact rendezvous with aircraft and other warships so the blow will be coordinated and complete.



While the loading is going on, staff officers call in the troop officers and explain the place and plan of the attack. All of them have known before just about where they were supposed to land, but in this briefing comes the first full explanation of why and how. Company and battalion officers are assigned objectives and then given maps detailing the terrain and the enemy forces they will have to overcome to reach them.

When the plan of attack has been outlined, officers who will lead troops begin to ask questions. It is imperative for them to know such things as the length of time their own sea and air bombardment will last, what signals will be used to communicate in the field, how to dispose of prisoners and a thousand other matters. Not until each officer is certain in his own mind as to what he is going to do, does the meeting break up.



Secondary briefings are held by troop officers with the non-coms of their companies. These meetings are the most important to the success of the attack, for in them the movements of every man in the force is planned. They are more informal than the other, for in bringing the broader strategy of attack down to the tactics of personal combat, an intimacy deepens between officers and men. In a few days each of them will be dependent upon the other for the safety of their lives.



The last night on the island brings a new kind of feeling. Nights under the canvas and netting were spent before wishing for the attack to come. Now that it has, the men begin to realize its implications. They brood on the cots and wonder if everything will work out.

Though they have deliberately tried to form no ties with the island where they have waited so long, they get a little sentimental about it. It is a hard thing for men not to regret leaving a place where they have lived, especially when they are leaving it for battle.



In the morning the troops are roused and fed, then loaded into the tracked Alligators that will ferry them out to the transports standing offshore. Around them in the steel craft, sergeants hover, checking equipment and making sure each Alligator starts off for the right ship at the right time. The men in these craft are combat troops and will be in the first waves to go ashore. Those who were embarked in LSTs are specialists who, with their equipment, will go in after the assault troops to build and repair.

There is a lot of good-natured banter in the Alligators on the morning of embarkation. The sun is just beginning to come out, so it is still cool, and everyone is looking forward to the ships and the voyage at sea.

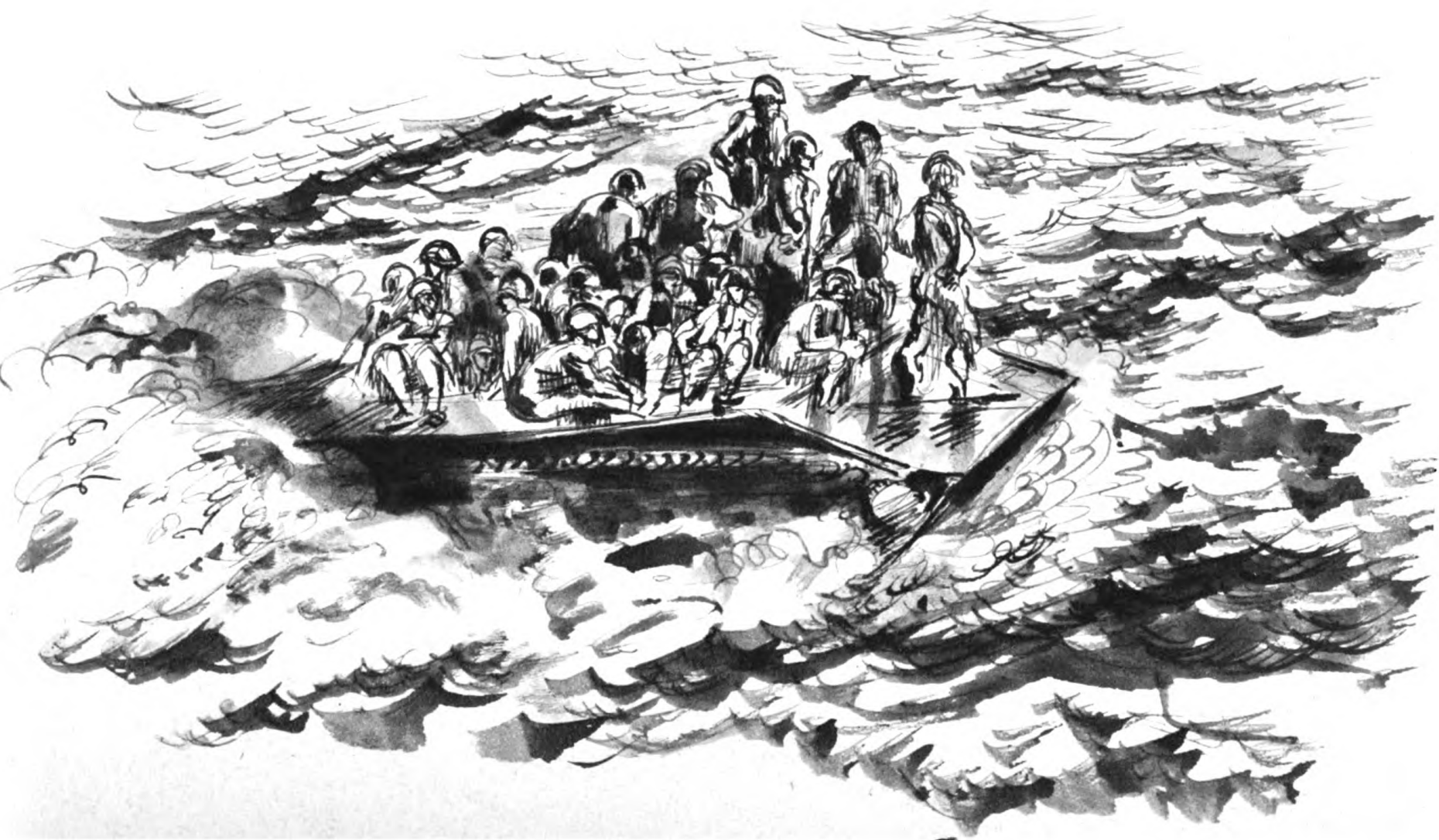


Embarkation for New Bedford

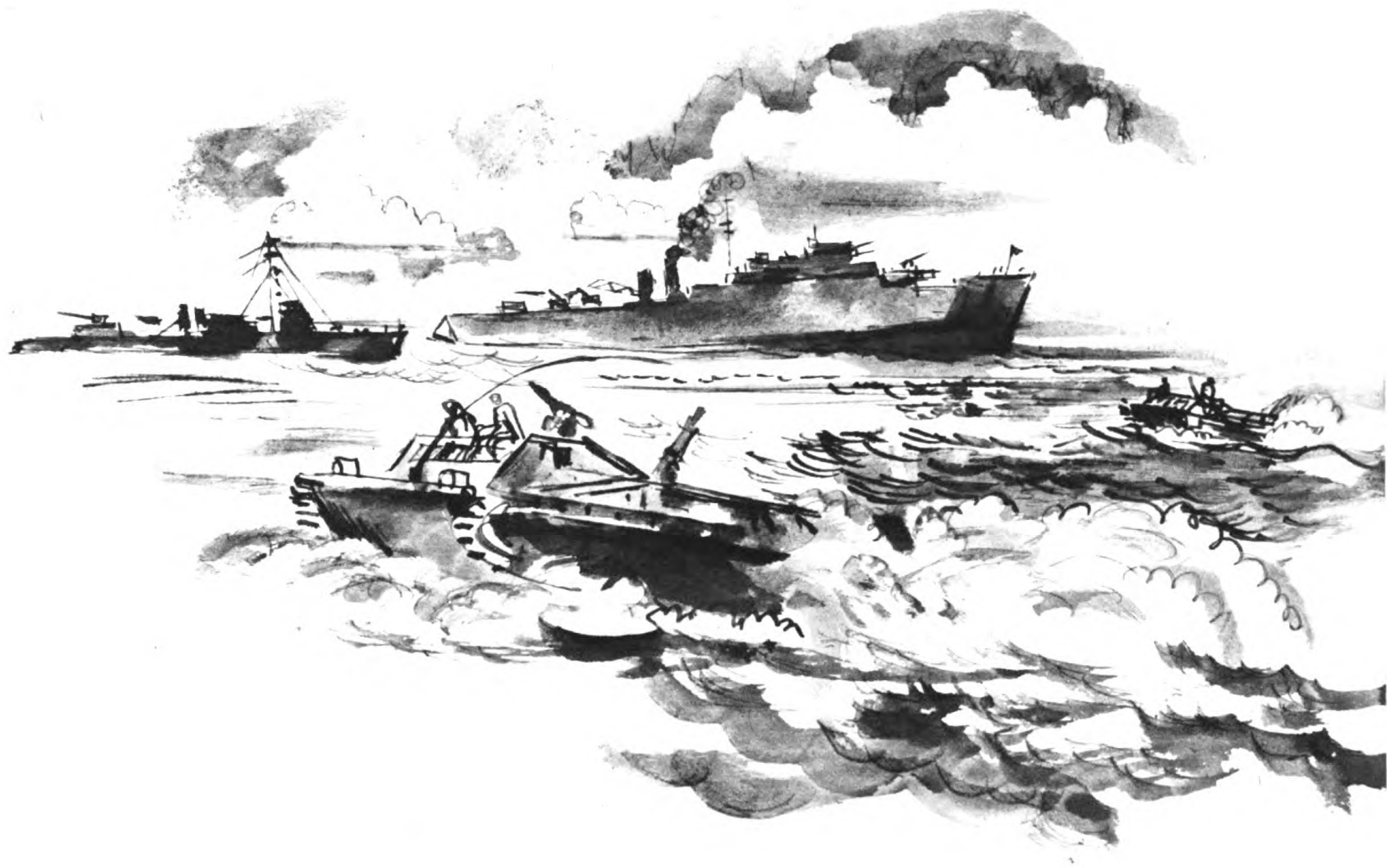
The Alligators crawl awkwardly across the beach and dip heavily into the water with their loads. These unarmored, amphibious tractors are perfect for the swamps and jungles of the South Pacific. They can go through miles of sea, traverse a beach and keep right on into the area beyond. Now they head eagerly for the transports in the bay.



Out in the bay the Alligators boil along with their drenched passengers, some of whom stand up to watch the ships grow bigger in the water — the great, gray hulls looming up like tall buildings in the green waves.



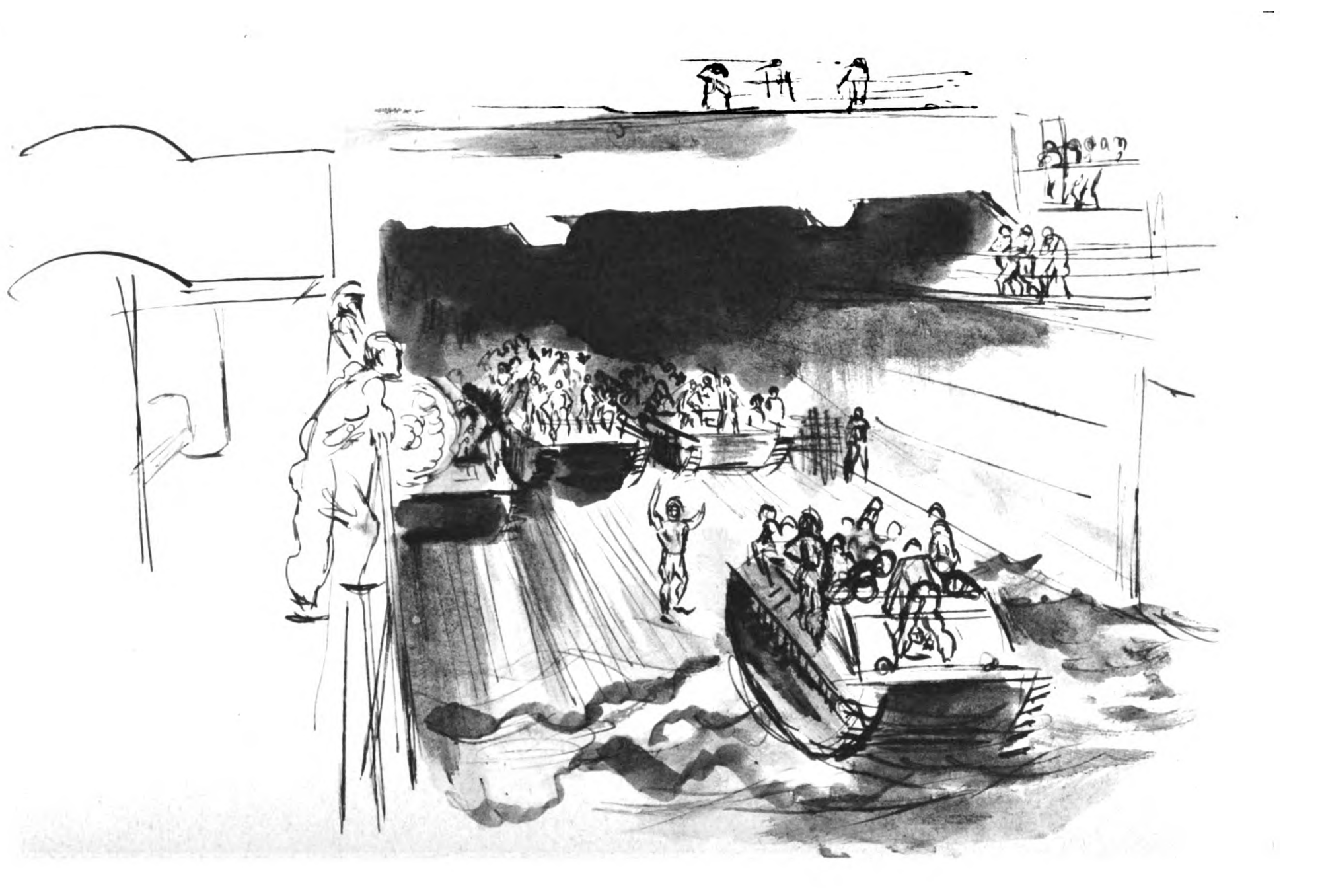
The attack flotilla is made up of transports, warships and strange craft peculiar to amphibious warfare. The biggest of these is the LSD (Landing Ship, Dock) whose high superstructure conceals a well into which small landing boats may run and shelter. All morning they circle about the mother ship, waiting their turn to dock.



From the decks of the troop transports, men get a new perspective of the island they have just left. Across the water it looks pleasant — a green mass of foliage and peaks shining dully in the sun. Even this little distance enhances the place that has been so hated. The excitement of leaving and the ability to forget past unpleasantness assert themselves, as the soldiers look back on what was once a sort of home. In the sea breeze, they forget the deadening heat of the jungle. Forgotten are flies and all stinging insects. In the morning on the ships, the world is clean and cool.



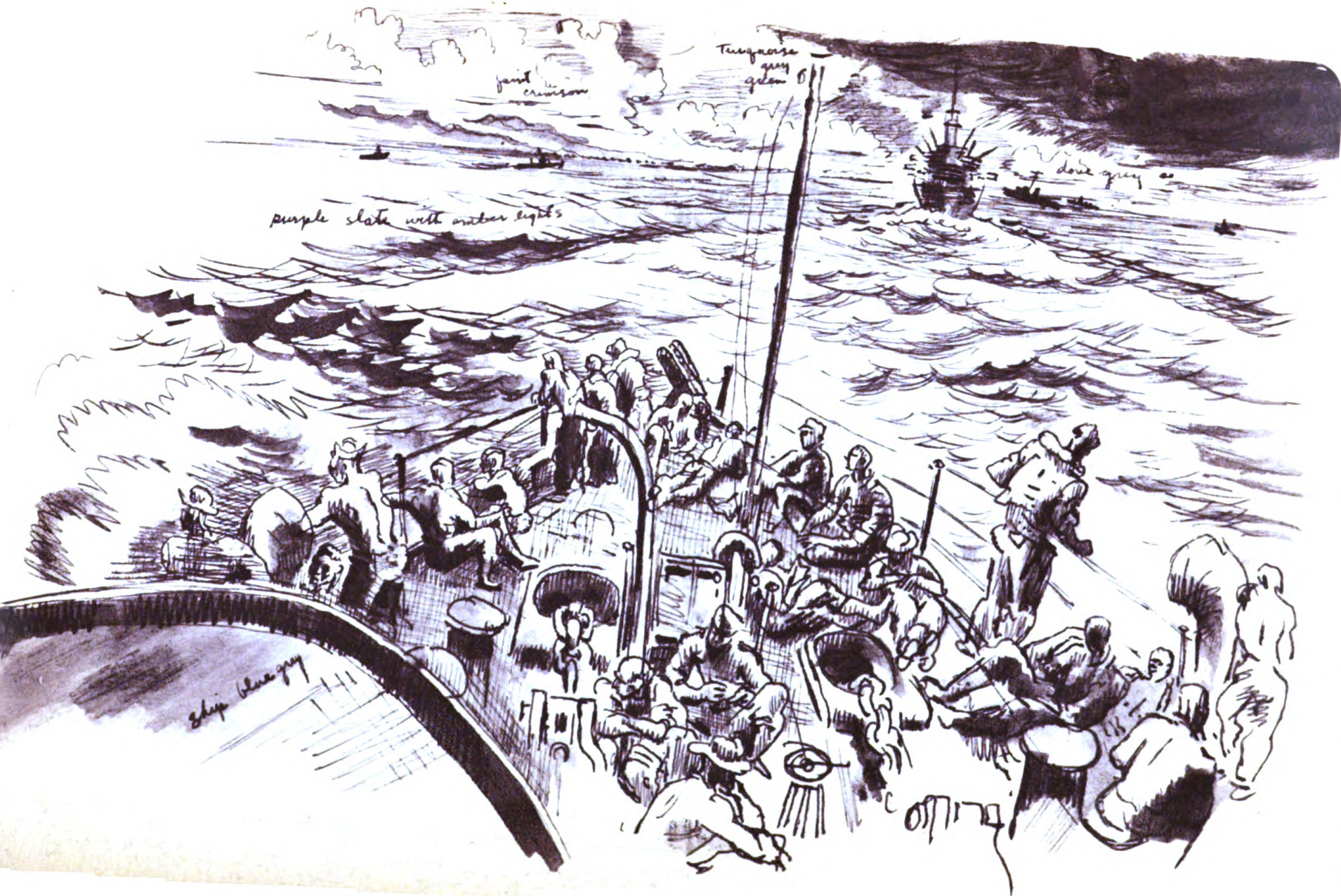
The well of the LSD begins to fill as the Alligators file out from shore. The webbed craft back in slowly, until they are ranged in long lines through the heart of the ship. They back in so that they will be ready to move out on the instant of attack and the men they carry will stay in, or near, them until that moment comes. First they clean their rifles and go over all equipment. Then they will play pinochle in little groups, or talk and read. Some will climb up on deck and stare down at the water sliding endlessly past when the task force gets underway.



A task force on its way to attack is like a solar system drifting through the universe. The movement of each ship has been plotted with the finality that directs the course of the stars. The force keeps to its course, and intricately and methodically within it move the ships. The mathematics of these maneuvers have been planned to bewilder submarines that find it hard to hit a target that is constantly changing direction.

The task force sails in a void of silence. Its radios are dead. Sometimes it may be lost to the world for weeks, churning through an eternity of never-changing water. Back at the bases, behind the desks of officialdom, the men who have dispatched the force are ignorant as to its whereabouts. They have given it orders to attack on a certain day and they trust their commands will be carried out. Ahead the enemy waits, knowing that attack may come but never certain of its time or direction. Silence and darkness at night are essentials to the task force and they are rigidly enforced.

The men are smothered in this silence. Sprawled on the decks of the ships, they speak in lowered tones as though a loud word might give their secret away. Subdued by the irresistible movement and the sobering nearness of attack, their speech is broken by long periods of quiet.



In the few hours before battle, men think of the world they knew and for which they are going to fight. They do not look back on it with longing, that stage has passed with embarkation. They do not regard it with hatred, that period will come later for many. Rather they think of it as a place in which they must establish their identity before the opportunity is forever lost. In stuffy steel cabins, in wardrooms, at mess tables still greasy with food they sit to communicate with this important, unreal land.

What does a man write to his wife, his mother, to his children? This message should have significance and nobility. Phrases from books and movies are culled from the mind but when put on paper they seem cheap and insincere. How can a man tell what he feels to someone who has lost the power to understand? Finally the letter is resolved into the stereotyped form of all past letters, cheerful, safe and unimaginative. It is enough for a man to have remembered and to have written before entering the mouth of hell.



The troops go to their bunks early, not because they must or feel that they should, but because they want to rest. They are tired and have few illusions about nerves or temperament. They look realistically at the fact that this is the last time they may have to sleep in a bunk for a long time. But before they sleep, they talk.

The conversation is not about battle. It flows casually on about drink and women and sports. In the soft buzz of voices, the men drop off to sleep one by one, the last sound in a man's ears being the pleasant murmur of fellow humans.



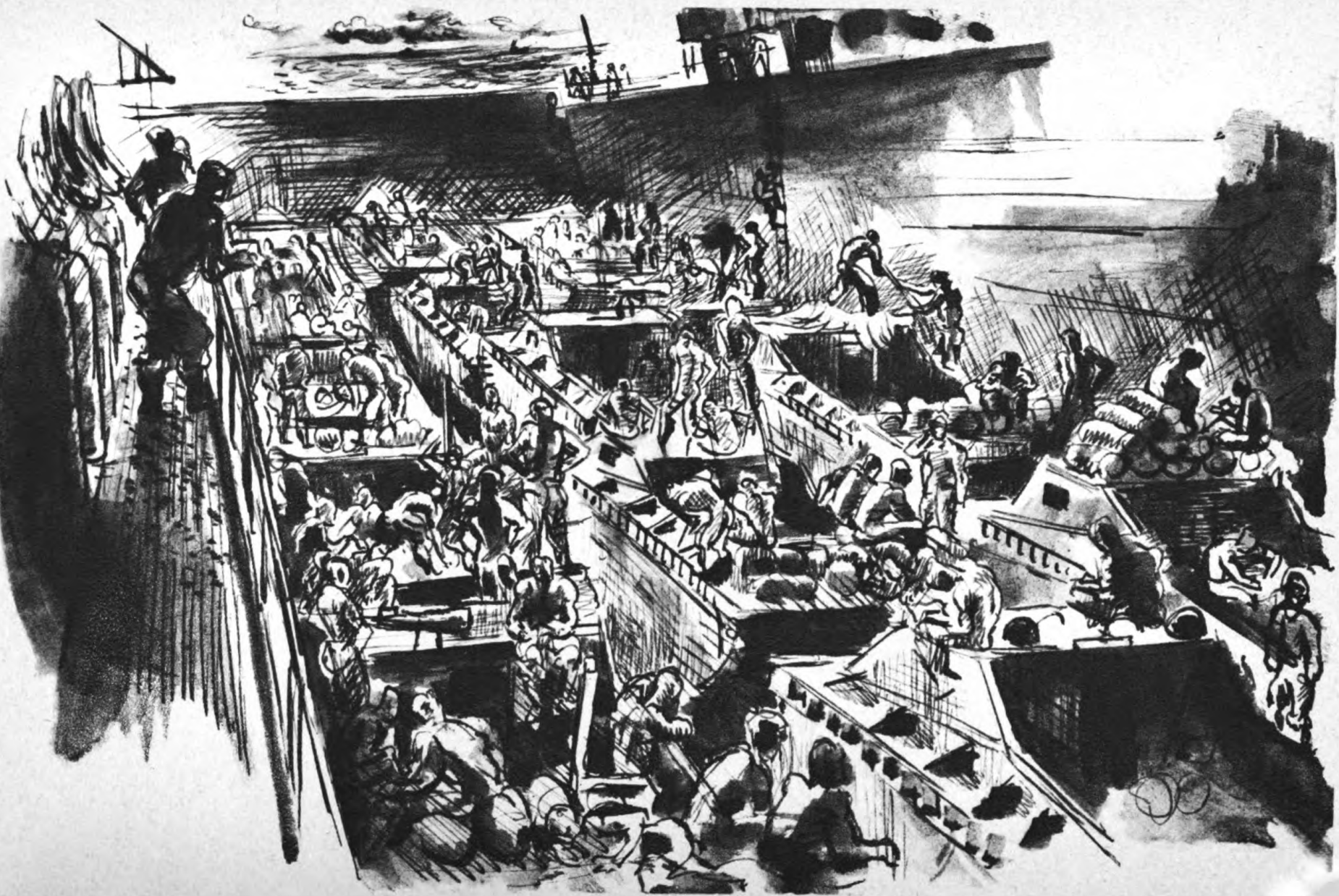
The Pacific sun burns through the early morning mist and strikes full on the bulkheads of the LSD's well. There the men clamber over the hulks of the Alligators and check them once again. A good deal of this day, which will be succeeded by battle, is spent in apparently aimless and repetitive tasks. Though they know everything has been cleaned and oiled three or four times already, men will do it again just to keep themselves busy.

Morning in the well



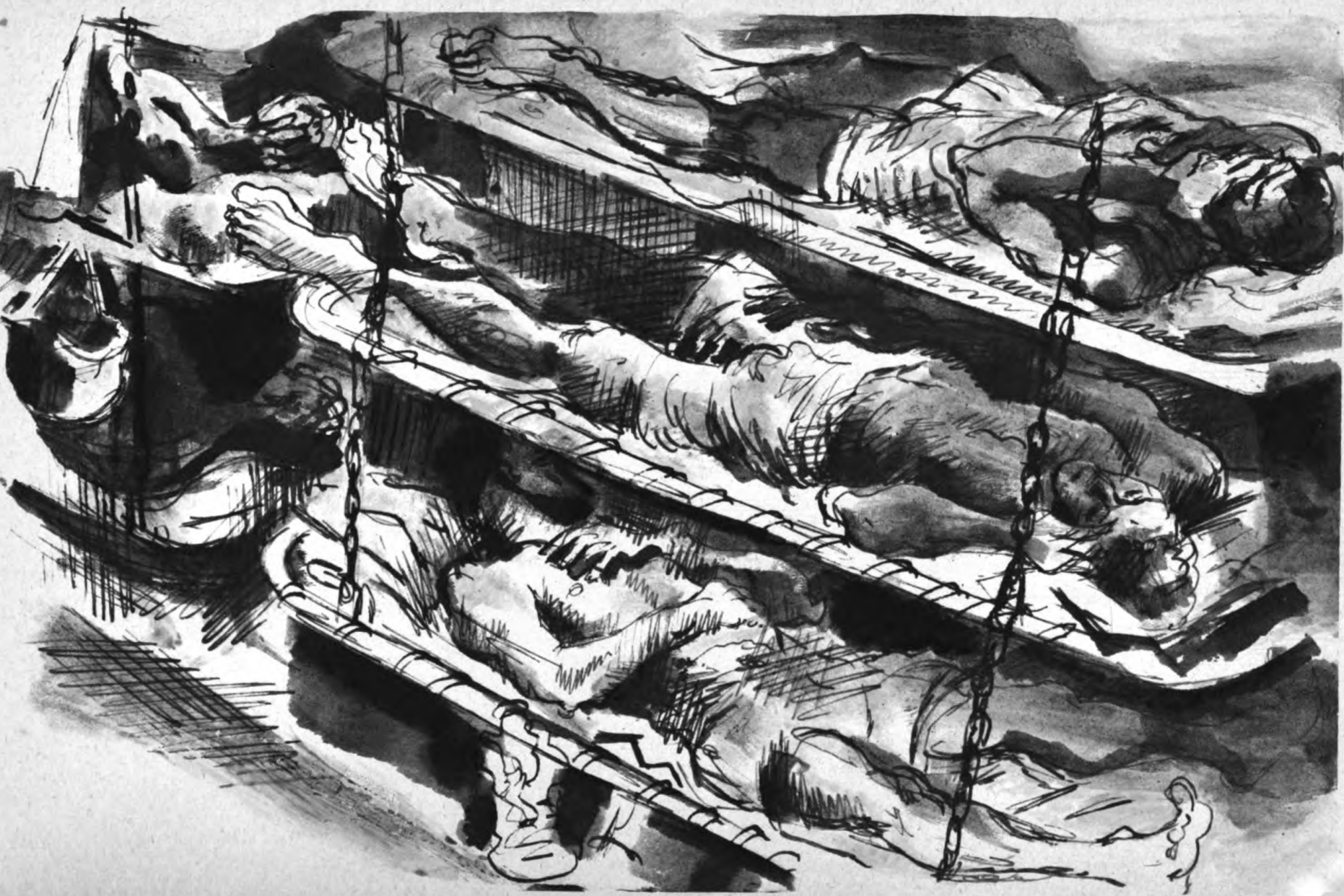
The troops get uneasy as the time for the attack draws nearer and they work their nervousness off in the Alligators. Tarpaulins are pulled over the radios and boxes of ammunition that will be carried ashore. The drivers monkey with engines and the sergeants stand with arms akimbo, looking battlewise and feeling very unsure of themselves. Talk has passed by now to the merest trivialities, for they are the only safe things to discuss.

As night comes, the men will curl up for a few hours' rest in the uncomfortable Alligators. In the middle of the night they will arrive off the enemy base and get the signal to attack.



Down in the hot compartments, troop officers have stripped and stretched out on the tiered bunks for a short sleep. To normal men, the heat that surrounds them would be unbearable. It comes in stifling waves from the tropics and the mixture of engine and animal warmth that billows through a fighting ship buttoned up for attack.

Their skin seems pallid in its atmosphere and rivulets of warm sweat streak their chests and legs. The air is like an over blast and even in sleep men struggle to breathe it. They lie here in rows, storing up energy for the sleepless nights ahead.



As the waiting becomes almost intolerable, the ships begin to stir with activity. They lie off the island now and from some of them sheets of yellow and red flame erupt into the night. From the battleships far out, the human eye can follow the flight of 16 inch shells, glowing like cinders as they arc across the sky. They curve up and outward, travelling like the light of a running locomotive, then burst with dull sounds on the island which is hidden in the darkness. The smaller guns bark with the surly tones of dogs roused from their kennels before morning. And mixed with these is the staccato of the 20 and 40 millimeters and the whiz of rockets from attack craft that are close inshore.

In the ships the final briefing comes. It is for the drivers of the Alligators who are being shown on large scale maps just where they must put men on the beaches. First they learn where the waves will form up, then where each individual landing boat is to go. This is deadly serious, for the attack is planned on having certain combat teams at specific places to take care of fortifications and entrenchments the air reconnaissance has revealed.

"You go in here, Mazzini", the captain indicates with a jabbing finger, "and for Christ's sake don't run up on the reef like you did off Shortland!"

Everyone laughs for they know he means it as a jest.

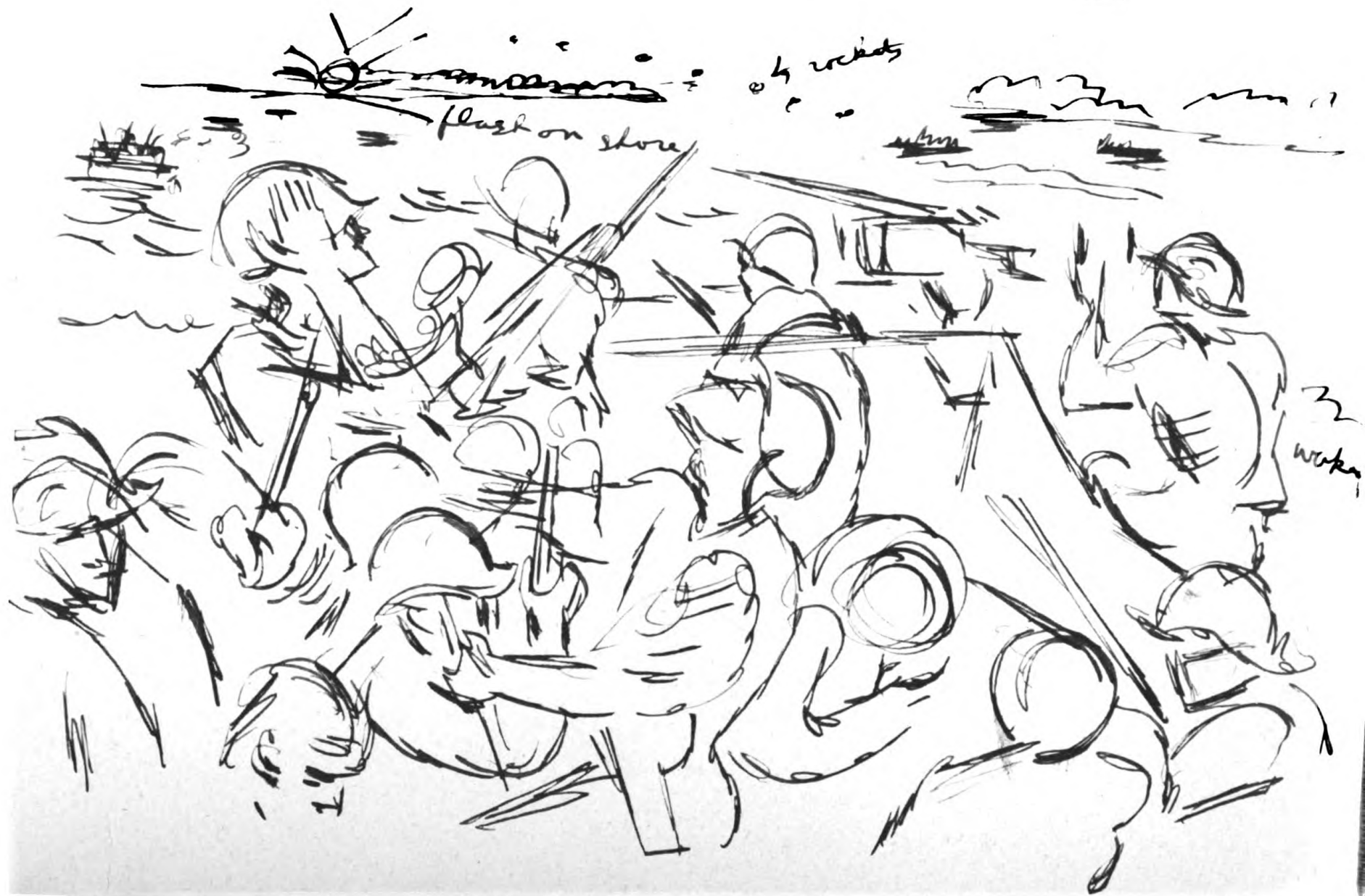


The thread snaps in the boats. The strain of waiting and preparing is over. As the men brace themselves against the slippery steel bulkheads, the whip-lash of spray hits their faces. Breath comes fast, but from excitement and not fear. There is nothing to fear yet, for the machine guns are hundreds of yards ahead in the half-light and the dull crumblings of explosions are from the task forces' and not the enemy's guns. At this stage the men are curious and peer forward at the unbelievable pattern of light and smoke rising above the shoreline. In the Alligators as the assault waves circle about they have the feeling of spectators at a titanic and exhilarating masterwork.

The Alligator plows into the sea. It tosses and struggles against the wake of those that cross its bow in the ordered confusion of forming up the waves. Some of the men are overcome with nausea and they lean over the Alligator's sides to vomit in the dark, swirling water. The others crane forward, their faces lit spasmodically by shell bursts, and think fitfully of what they will meet on the beach.



The wave is formed and the Alligators move up to the Control Boat to be signaled in on the split-second. The battle is beginning to be joined. Jap planes are overhead now and some ship fires a red ribbon of tracer up into the blackness. Rockets are lobbed in at a strongpoint and the crackle of enemy fire from the beach is an ominous undertone to the larger noises of the night.



Like athletes racing abreast, the landing craft fling themselves toward the beach. The motors are opened up and the hulls buck against the water and slap down viciously into the swells. Near the shore a strident tattoo drums along the plates of some Alligators as Japanese machine gun bullets find their mark.

Then the waves past drifting hulks. These are disabled landing craft and often their coxwains are slumped mutely over the wheel. In the dark hulls lie dead and wounded, some of them moaning softly but others looking beseechingly at the able craft in pitiful and dumb surprise.



The beach is the threshold of death. Behind its strip of gritty coral sand stands the jungle, lush, evil and pocked with hidden traps. Thought and feeling stop as the men run through the surf and set foot on the beach. There is nothing to reflect now, instinct is the dominant power. Men crouch, fire, run forward to crouch and fire again — driven by ingrained rules of warfare and the simple logic of combat with which all males are born.

Just as their minds are frozen on the beach, so are the expressions on men's faces. They are set and inhuman like the faces of men who walk through violent dreams. Soldiers live behind masks in this instant — stark and unchanging masks of fear, cruelty, awareness and hate.



They continue to flood up over the beach; silent, cautious figures emerging from the sea. Already advance units are in the jungle, probing carefully for the overgrown bunkers of coconut logs from which come bursts of machine gun fire. Mortar shells, thrown from far back in the trees, are exploding on the beach and there are bodies in the water and on the sand.

No matter when a man lands on the beach, in the first or the last wave, he is in danger. And none steps on that shoreline but feels the same primeval uneasiness brought by the proximity of violent death.



Supply boats come in from the ships just after the assault waves have landed. First they bring ammunition, the most important commodity on a battle field, then water and then food. The water will be warm but men who have been fighting for their lives under the hot sun will drink it eagerly. The food is K Rations, small cans of cheese and meat, hard fortified biscuits and dextrose tablets. This the men will eat when they remember, for in the stress of combat few are hungry. The heat and the sickening sweet smell of the dead which is beginning to rise from the shore, dulls all appetites.

Long lines of heavily-laden figures march slowly up from the supply boats. They dump their freight in piles, then go back for more. Often one of the burdened figures will stumble and drop, sobbing as a sniper's bullet rips into his flesh.



Faint in the distance the sound comes at first, an indistinct background hum to the other sounds of war. It grows louder and insistent, until finally someone looks back and then ducks instinctively. Over the bay Jap planes are coming in low, Zeros whose wings slant frighteningly as they turn and make for the beach head.

The men drop boxes, bales and packages and burrow at the earth, trying to hide from the terror of that sight.



Bullets from strafing planes thud into the ground with a kind of sadistic glee. "Tunk, tunk, tunk" they go into the soft, corrupt mold beneath the trees in precise rows as though a giant sewing machine was at work. Curiously the men think the sequence of sounds all out of order, for first there is the faint pound of bullets, then the roar of the strafing plane's engine, then a queer remote series of "pops" that is the noise of the machine gun just traveling down to earth.



The frenzied seconds under direct fire are the worst any man will ever have to face. Each soldier feels himself the personal target for the streams of lead that are hosing down over the earth. He scrabbles with his hands into the soil, in an unconscious effort to protect the vital areas of face, chest, abdomen and genitalia. Under the reassuring steel of his helmet he tries to compress his whole body, pushing up and into it until his head rings with pain. In craters and ditches, men curl in the comforting, unremembered position in which they lay in their mother's womb.

Bodies quiver as adrenalin is forced into the blood stream. Mouths go dry and limbs twitch spasmodically as nervous control is lost. The world is filled with tremendous roaring and tearing sounds that blot out everything but the immense reality of the present.



Men are alone when they are under fire. Each lies cabined in his own fear, wrestling for control of himself and the precious thing that is his body. They do not think, or undergo strange exaltations, or pray. All such things require time and there is none of that crouching under the hammerblows of bullets. Rather, they are swept by the oldest feeling known to man — self-preservation.

A leaf, or a small stone will be utilized in the desperate attempt to hide from death. Muscles react before the mind in the effort to escape. They draw a man behind the boles of trees and into shallow indentations. They plunge him into puddles of dirty, fetid water. They drag him unfeelingly across sharp outcroppings of coral which lacerate skin like the blades of knives. They tie him into knots so tight he will ache for days afterwards.

Only when it is over and the roaring dies away into the hum from which it came, does he take stock and notice his ludicrous position. In shamed confusion he rearranges himself into an attitude that will pass the world's standards for being one of bravery.



Then anger reasserts itself and the smart of lying helpless becomes too much to bear. In a magnificent, futile gesture a captain leaps to his feet and fires a fifteen round carbine clip at the strafing planes slipping swiftly away into the air.



The planes have left dead and wounded behind them. They are noticed when men begin to pick themselves up and then stare unbelievably down at figures in their midst whose green battle jackets are stained with a dirty red. The narrowness of their own escape, mingled with quick pity, stuns them for a moment. Then they call for help.

The wounded are given tender and efficient care. Deft fingers apply bandages, give plasma and jab syrettes of morphine into bodies that scream for its blessed release.



The faces of the wounded are slack with shock. Eyeballs stand out under the lids and the cheeks are sunken under the bony ridge of the nose. Looking down at them, stretched helpless and inviolate on the litters, whole men feel that their comrades have left. They are gone where well men may not follow, wandering slowly through the wide and empty meadows of pain.



Some are past the limits of medical aid. They lie quietly bleeding to death, drugged and terribly remote. Bubbles of red spittle form on their lips and now and then phrases well up from their subconscious speaking of home and boyhood.

Over them bend doctors who can do nothing now but watch.

"Don't worry, son", they say, "you're going to be o.k."

From the bloody pulps over which they lean come wise and inscrutable smiles as the dying look up to apologize for being so much trouble in the last ebbing seconds of life.



From one of the wounded comes a faint and despairing cry for water. A hand props the suppliant's head while the other holds a canteen to his lips. The man drinks with great, racking swallows, letting the liquid flood into a body parched dry by fear and suffering. He drinks as though he might never taste water again but when he is at last satisfied he falls back contentedly on the ground and waves a hand in gratitude.



The doctors move along the rows of patients, swabbing blood from faces, replacing tourniquets and making swift professional gestures that seem out of place on the dirty, littered beach. Their chief worry is to get the men out to the ships where there are operating rooms, surgical equipment and clean bunks. None of the wounded will live very long in the stinking heat of the beach.



After the beachhead has been won, it must be held. Men begin to dig in, shoveling out emplacements for guns and small holes for themselves which they will use for shelter and sleeping.

The wheel has come almost full circle now.

Fighting is still going on but the issue has been decided. The new base will be built up and for awhile attempts will be made towards comfort. Cots and netting will be put in the camouflaged shelters, a canteen will be built, roads bulldozed under the trees and the routine of waiting for the next attack will start once more.



Monotony, excitement and fear are over for the wounded. Once they accept the fact that they will live, contentment comes to them in the ships. They luxuriate in unaccustomed attention and look forward hopefully to the base hospital and the possibility of going back home. They live more easily with pain now and have learned to be acquiescent in the face of something they cannot fight or kill.



The needs of the wounded are cared for by kind and sympathetic hands.
Tenderly they change dressings that cover terrible wounds.



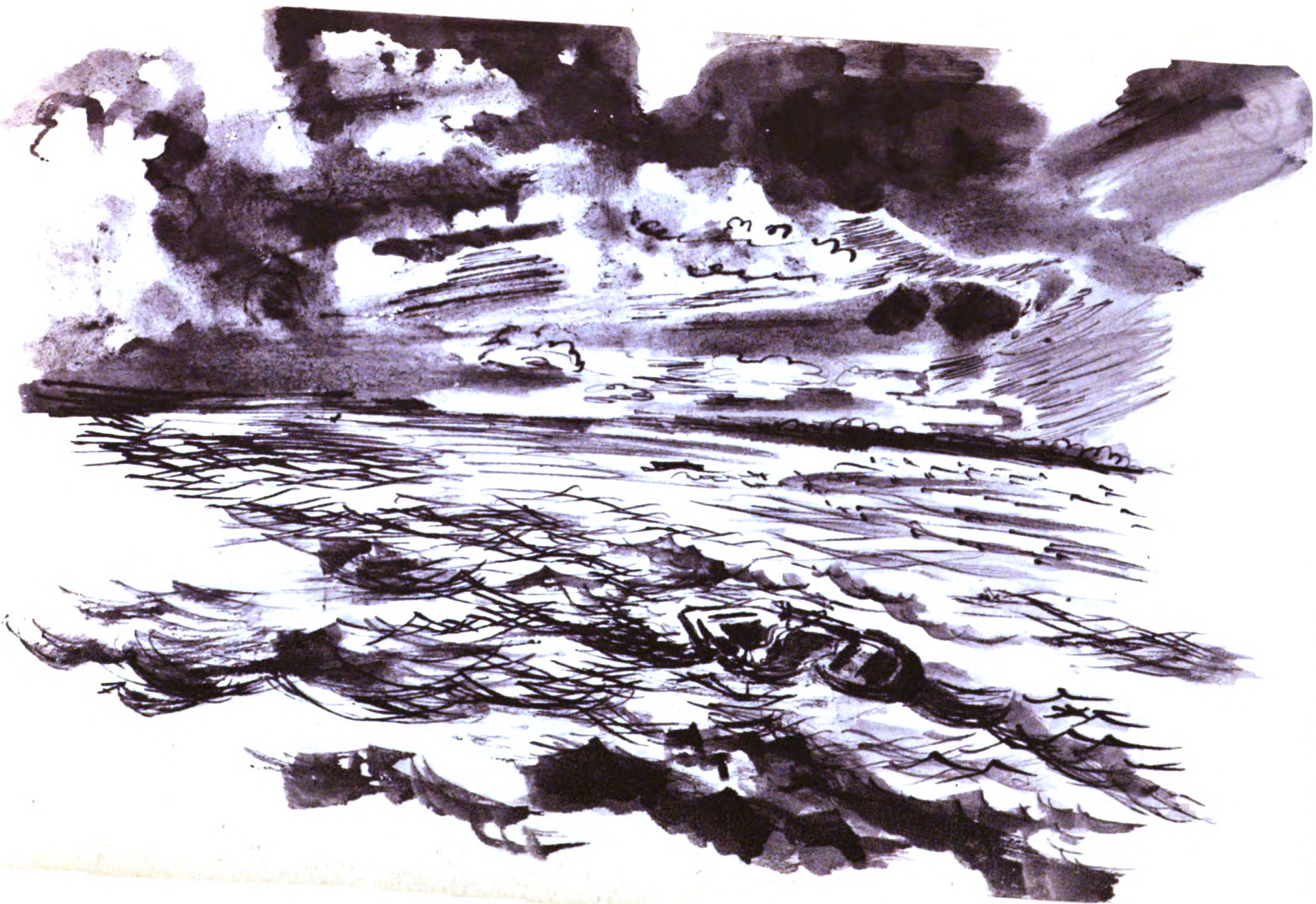
Most of the talk in the sick bays deals with the stories of how each man came to be there. Everyone listens because the battle, which is but confused fragments to most participants, begins to unfold in these details. And everyone who listens is sure of a good audience for his own story.

"Well I was moving up alongside the trail with a B.A.R. and just got set up when this bastard lets me have it from a tree. Never did see him either. It felt just like getting banged with a baseball bat, only it lasted longer. They tell me this ship's going straight back to the States. Did you hear anything about that, soldier?"



Out in the bay drifts a last footnote to the attack. A rubber assault boat is slowly being carried out to sea. Once it held men who used it to move over a reef, into the bay and make for a heavily-fortified section of the beach. Before they reached small arms range, enemy machine guns cut through the figures in the boat, the tracers knocking men into the surf.

Laboriously they turned the boat and tried to paddle away, but the tide had dropped and they were trapped by the barrier of the reef. So the men lay there and took it until none were left in the boat.



The boat still holds a few pitiful remnants of the slaughtered. A pistol belt, some grenades and ammunition pouches slide across the wet rubber bottom as men on a ship pull it up from the water.

And still where some man died, undiluted by time or the sea, glows a pool of bright, arterial blood.

Blood

Picked up in the bay
Rubber boat with gear



Some cases back from the beach have no bandages to cover their wounds. These are the ones who have broken under combat; who have been sent into shock by sudden, brutal experiences; who have dropped from malaria which has slept in their systems to be stirred into activity by tremendous bodily exertion.

They slump in out of the way corners, desiring nothing so much as the chance to be left alone.



The faces of men back from battle keep their own secrets. Behind them are sights and sounds, memories of death that can never be put into words. They will be asked when they come home, what it was like and start at questioners with a puzzled frown.

"It was tough", they will say and let it go at that.

These men carry within them things that even their wives and children will never comprehend. They are marked by the love and understanding of their comrades, by the sounds and scent of battle and by dreary months of wasted time. The marks will fade but never be eradicated. Long afterwards, walking along urban streets, a call or the flash of a face will bring some of the misery back. They will wake in the night from vivid and awful dreams, with sweat crawling at armpits and groin.



ULLMAN GRAVURES
THE ULLMAN COMPANY
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK



